

GULF OF MEXICO (GULF) AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
AMENDMENT 18 TO THE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN
ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

JANUARY 2011

What are the changes to management resulting from Amendment 18?

- Four species are removed from federal management: cero, little tunny, dolphin, and bluefish (Gulf of Mexico only).
- Separate migratory groups, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic, are established for cobia. For Atlantic group cobia, allocations between commercial and recreational sectors are set.
- Annual catch limits and annual catch targets are established.
- Accountability measures are established.
- The framework procedure (which allows for more timely implementation of routine regulatory changes) is updated.

Why are management changes needed?

- Annual catch limits and accountability measures are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
 - Annual catch limits are the highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain the stock.
 - Optional annual catch targets are acceptable levels of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.
 - Accountability measures help keep landings within the catch limits or catch targets, or make adjustments if those levels are exceeded.

Why are species being removed from the fishery management plan?

- In the process of developing new federal regulations, NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) reviewed all of their fishery management plans to determine which species are still in need of federal management.
- Four species (cero, little tunny, dolphin, and bluefish [Gulf only]) were originally included in the management plan “for data collection purposes”, but data collection on any species can be required of fishermen and dealers that hold federal permits, regardless of the presence of that species in a fishery management plan.
- No management actions have ever been needed for these species.
- The South Atlantic has a separate management plan for dolphin and wahoo; an amendment to that management plan will set catch limits for those species. Bluefish in the Atlantic are managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council.
- If landings or effort changed for any of these species and the Councils determined management at the federal level was needed, these species could be added back into the management plan at a later date.

Which species have catch limits and accountability measures?

- King mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia have catch limits and accountability measures.
- Each species is separated into Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups; each migratory group has separate catch limits and accountability measures.

What are the accountability measures?

- The accountability measures will be implemented if the catch limit or catch target is reached for each species group in the table below.
 - In-season actions will be implemented during the same season the catch limit or catch target is reached or projected to be reached.
 - Post-season actions will be implemented in the following season if the catch limit or catch target is exceeded.

Species/Group	Commercial In-season	Recreational In-season	Commercial Post-season	Recreational Post-Season
King Mackerel				
Gulf	Closure by zone, sub-zone and gear if sector or gear quota is reached*	Revert the bag limit to zero if recreational allocation is reached	None	None
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached	None	None	Reduce the bag limit in the following year if stock catch limit is reached
Spanish Mackerel				
Gulf	Both sectors close if the stock catch limit is reached		None	
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached*	None	None	Reduce the bag limit in the following year if stock catch limit is reached
Cobia				
Gulf	Both sectors close if the stock catch target is reached		None	
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached	None	None	Reduce the length of the fishing season in the following year if stock catch limit is reached

*In some zones, trip limit reductions also take place as outlined in current regulations.

Will payback of any overages be required?

- For Atlantic groups, if the stock is overfished (population abundance is too low) and the catch limit is exceeded, payback of the overage will be required the following year.
- At this time, none of these stocks are overfished, so payback will not be implemented.

What does the framework procedure do?

- The framework procedure provides a mechanism for timely implementation of routine actions and a guideline for implementing such actions in a consistent manner.
- The updated procedure increases the flexibility of the Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service by identifying measures that can be changed under the procedure, and clarifies the appropriate process needed for each type of change.